NUMB. CCCXII.

The SPECTATOR.

Nec Veneris pharetris macer eſt; aut lampade fervet:
Ille faces ardent, veniunt a dote ſagittæ. Juv.

Tueſday, February 26. 1712.

SPECTATOR,

I am amazed that among all the Variety of Characters, with which you have enriched your Speculations, you have never given us a Picture of thoſe audacious young Men among us, who commonly go by the Name of *Fortune-Stealers*. You muſt know, I am one who live in a continual Apprehenſion of this ſort of People, that lie in wait Day and Night, for our Children, and ought to be conſidered as a kind of Kidnappers within the Law. I am the Father of a Young Lady, whom I begin to look upon as Marriageable, and who has looked upon her ſelf as ſuch for theſe Six Years. She is now in the Nineteenth Year of her Age. The Fortune-hunters have already caſt their Eyes upon her, and are ready to plant themſelves in her View whenever ſhe appears in any Publick Aſſembly. I have lately caught a young Jackanapes, with a pair of Fringed Gloves, in the very Fact. You muſt know, Sir, I have kept her as a Priſoner of late ever ſince ſhe was in her Teens. Her Chamber-windows are croſs-barr'd, ſhe is not permitted to go out of the Houſe but with her Keeper, who is a ſtay'd Relation of my own; I have ſtrictly forbid her the uſe of Pen and Ink for above a Twelve-Month laſt paſt, and do not ſuffer a Candle to be carried into her Room before it has been ſearched. Notwithſtanding theſe Precautions, I am at my Wits End for fear of any ſudden Surprize. There were, two or three Nights ago, ſome Fiddles heard in the Street, which I have ſince had Reaſon to portend me no Good; not to mention a Tall Man, that has been ſeen walking before the Houſe more than once this Winter. My Maid-Servant likewiſe informs me, that the Girl has received Letters to her twice or thrice of a Gentleman that wears a fair Wig, and that ſhe loves to go to Church more than ever ſhe did in her Life. She gave me the Slip about a Week ago, upon which my whole Family was in Alarm. I immediately diſpatched Servants and Cry after her to the Change, to her Dancing-maker, and to the young Ladies that Viſit her; but after above an Hours ſearch ſhe returned to me herſelf, having been taking a Walk, as ſhe told me, by *Roſamond*'s Pond. I have hereupon turned off her Woman, doubled her Guards, and given new Inſtructions to my Relation, who, to do him Juſtice, keeps a watchful Eye over all her Motions. This, Sir, keeps me in a perpetual Anxiety, and makes me very often watch when my Daughter ſleeps, as I am afraid ſhe is

'even with me in her Turn. Now, Sir, what I 'would deſire of you, is, to repreſent to this Fluttering Tribe of young Fellows, who are for making their Fortunes by theſe indirect Means, that 'ſtealing a Man's Daughter for the ſake of her Portion, is but a kind of Tolerated Robbery; and that 'they make but a poor Amends to the Father, 'whom they plunder after this Manner, by going 'to Bed with his Child. Dear, Sir, be ſpeedy in 'your Thoughts on this Subject, that, if poſſible 'they may appear before the Diſbanding of the 'Army.

I am, SIR,

Your Moſt Humble Servant

Tim. Watchwell.

Themiſtocles, the great *Athenian* General, being asked whether he wou'd chuſe to marry his Daughter to an Indigent Man of Merit, or to a Worthleſs Man of an Eſtate, reply'd, That he ſhould prefer a Man without an Eſtate, to an Eſtate without a Man. The worſt of it is, our Modern Fortune-Hunters are thoſe who turn their Heads that way, becauſe they are good for nothing elſe. If a young Fellow finds he can make nothing of *Coke* and *Littleton*, he provides himſelf with a Ladder of Ropes, and by that means very often enters upon the Premiſes.

The ſame Art of Scaling has likewiſe been practiſed with good Succeſs by many Military Ingineers. Stratagems of this Nature make Parts and Induſtry ſuperfluous, and cut ſhort the way to Riches.

Nor is Vanity a leſs Motive than Idleneſs to this kind of mercenary Purſuit. A Fop who admires his Perſon in a Glaſs, ſoon enters into a Reſolution of making his Fortune by it, not queſtioning but every Woman that falls in his way will do him as much Juſtice as he does himſelf. When an Heireſs ſees a Man throwing particular Graces into his Ogle, or talking loud within her Hearing, ſhe ought to look to her ſelf; but if with-all ſhe obſerves a Pair of Red-Heels, a Patch, or any other Particularity in his Dreſs, ſhe cannot take too much care of her Perſon. Theſe are Baits not to be trifled with, Charms that have done a world of Execution, and made their way into Hearts which have been thought impregnable. The Force of a Man with theſe Qualifications is ſo well known, that I am credibly inform'd there are ſeveral Female Undertakers about the Change, who upon the Arrival of a likely Man out

of

of a neighb'ring Kingdom, will furniſh him with proper Dreſs from Head to Foot, to be paid for at a double Price on the Day of Marriage.

We muſt however diſtinguiſh between Fortune-Hunters and Fortune-Stealers. The firſt are thoſe aſſiduous Gentlemen who employ their whole Lives in the Chace, without ever coming at the Quarry. *Suffenus* has comb'd and powder'd at the Ladies for thirty Years together, and taken his Stand in a Side Box, 'till he's grown wrinkled under their Eyes. He is now laying the ſame Snares for the preſent Generation of Beauties, which he practiſed on their Mothers. *Cottilus*, after having made his Applications to more than you meet with in Mr. *Cowley*'s Ballad of Miſtreſſes, was at laſt ſmitten with a City Lady of 20000*l.* Sterling; but died of old Age before he cou'd bring Matters to bear. Nor muſt I here omit my worthy Friend Mr. HONEYCOMB, who has often told us in the Club, that for twenty Years ſucceſſively, upon the Death of a Childleſs rich Man, he immediately drew on his Boots, called for his Horſe, and made up to the Widow. When he is rallied upon his ill Succeſs, WILL. with his uſual Gaiety tells us, that he always found them Prae-engaged.

Widows are indeed the great Game of your Fortune-Hunters. There is ſcarce a young Fellow in the Town of ſix Foot high, that has not paſſed in Review before one or other of theſe wealthy Relicts. *Hudibraſ*'s *Cupid*, who

——took his Stand
Upon a Widow's Jointure-Land,

is daily employed in throwing Darts, and kindling Flames. But as for Widows, they are ſuch a Subtle Generation of People, that they may be left to their own Conduct; or, if they make a falſe Step in it, they are anſwerable for it to no body but themſelves. The young innocent Creatures who have no Knowledge and Experience of the World, are thoſe whoſe Safety I would principally conſult in this Speculation. The Stealing of ſuch an one ſhould, in my Opinion, be as puniſhable as a Rape. Where there is no Judgment there is no Choice; and why the inveigling a Woman before ſhe is come to Years of Diſcretion, ſhould not be as Criminal as the ſeducing of her before ſhe is ten Years old, I am at a Loſs to comprehend.

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AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, this preſent Tueſday, the 26th Day of February, will be preſented the True and Ancient Hiſtory of King Lear. By Her Majeſty's Command no Perſons are to be admitted behind the Scenes.

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